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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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CONSERVATION AWARD GOES TO HOLYOKE WATER POWER COMPANY

Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay announced today that a Department of the Interior's Conservation Service Award is being made to the Holyoke Water Power Company, of Holyoke, Mass., "in recognition of its outstanding service in the field of conservation of natural resources."

The award is based upon six years of persistent efforts by the Holyoke Water Power Company to develop and construct a workable fish passage facility for shad at the South Hadley Falls Dam on the Connecticut River.

As the result of the Company's interest in conservation, this newly developed fishway has succeeded in reopening a fishery which has been closed for more than a century. Both sport and commercial fishermen are expected to benefit from the reestablishment of the shad fishery in that area.

John L. Farley, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, will present the award to Robert E. Barrett, Jr., president of the Holyoke Water Power Company, at the annual dinner of Wildlife Conservation, Inc., on Friday, February 3, at 7 p.m. in the Dorothy Quincy Suite, John Hancock Hall, 200 Berkely Street, Boston, Mass. Approximately 400 people are expected to attend this 23d annual "Wildlife Conservation Roundup."

In cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Holyoke Water Power Company has worked since 1949 to seek a satisfactory solution to the problem of shad passage at the Company's South Hadley Falls Dam. The difficulties encountered in attempting to pass shad over the dam were well known to the company since two earlier fishways which it had constructed on the site in 1873 and 1940 had failed in their purpose.

The Connecticut River had salmon and shad in tremendous numbers in the 18th century. The Indians used the shad and the white men took the salmon. Salmon fishing ended about 1800 when a dam was erected. Salmon do not return to their spawning grounds if they are denied access to it for one generation. Shad, however, do return and after the dam was removed several years later they again used the upper reaches of the river for spawning, and shad fishing soon became a big business.

But, as the years passed, industrialization along the North Atlantic coastal rivers resulted in water pollution and the erection of dams which restricted the passage of migratory fish. Conservationists freely predicted the end of a great natural resource. Fish ladders were built consisting of a series of ascending

pools in the form of watery staircases, but the shad did not use them. Variations of the ladders were tried without success.

In 1949, under the terms of a license issued by the Federal Power Commission for the erection of a hydroelectric station at the dam, the Holyoke Water Power Company agreed to provide satisfactory fish-passage facilities at their dam.

To achieve a fully functional fishway device, the Company decided to base their studies upon the habits and peculiarities of the shad. A Company engineer was assigned to work closely with Service representatives. In December 1949 this engineer was sent to the West Coast, at company expense, to study fish-passage facilities in that region.

During the summer of 1950, the Company participated in fishway model studies conducted at the Alden Hydraulic Laboratory of Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester, Mass. This study was established to make determinations on the hydraulic conditions which would prevail at the fishway and to test the reactions of fish to these conditions.

In 1952 a new fishway began operation. Although certain features operated most successfully, the fishway failed to pass many shad during its first three years of operation.

At this point the Company had more than performed the obligations imposed by the terms of the Federal Power Commission license. But, in the interests of conservation, the Company decided to continue its efforts to produce a more satisfactory fish-passage device.

During the spring of 1955, Company officials designed and installed a new automatic hopper device. This device proved to be successful and nearly 5,000 shad were lifted over the Holyoke Dam. For the first time in 107 years, considerable numbers of shad reached their ancestral spawning grounds.

In recognition of this significant accomplishment, Fish and Wildlife Service officials nominated the Holyoke Water Power Company for the Department's Conservation Service Award.

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